Healthy Eating Tip

Love What You Eat

A Google search for "heart healthy foods" will get you an overload of information about what to eat to improve or maintain cardiovascular health. The gist is this: consume a lot of plant-based foods, more fish and less meat, maybe a little dark chocolate and red wine here and there. That's about as technical as you need to get. However, nourishing yourself optimally with food is about so much more than what you put in your body. Among other things, it's also about how you eat. In honor of Heart Health month, instead of another top ten list of foods to eat or not eat, let's consider food and eating through the lens of a different sort of heart-focus: LOVE. Hang in there with me. Here's the connection:

What's love got to do with it?

Would you say you *love to eat?* Many people do. In fact, people who struggle with overeating and dieting often say they love food so much they have trouble eating it in moderation! In actuality we often think, talk and eat in ways that don't demonstrate love for food at all. For example, how many times have you:

- Hurried through a delicious snack or meal only to wish you had more at the end so that you could really pay attention and enjoy it this time?
- Consumed a meal or snack while in front of your phone, computer, or television with more of your attention on the screen than on the food?
- Eaten when you're not the slightest bit hungry, only to feel stuffed and tired afterwards?

These are all forms of mindless eating and they're very common in Western society today. We often place more value on our busy lives and multi-tasking than present moment awareness and the experience of eating.

From Corporate Fitness Works Wellness Manager, Rebecca Johnson

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What happens when we eat mindlessly, quickly, or while doing other things? We often end up missing the pleasure and satisfaction all together, and eating more than our body needs because we weren't mentally present to notice the food and its effects on our body. Over time, we cultivate habits that can keep us stuck in a love-hate relationship with food.

Making the shift

Instead of focusing so much on *what* you're eating, offer some of your attention to *how* you eat. If you recognize a tendency to eat mindlessly, quickly, or while distracted - and you know this isn't serving you well - consider bringing more purpose and awareness to the act of eating. This doesn't mean you need to sit lotus style, chant, or take five minutes to eat a single raisin. Eating more mindfully can be done in very practical ways.

In her book *Eat What You Love, Love What You Eat,* renowned mindful eating expert Dr. Michelle May offers the following ideas for bringing more intention and attention to your relationship with food:

- Check in with your hunger level before you start eating. If you realize you're not actually hungry, consider postponing eating. (Remember: food always tastes better when we're really hungry for it!)
- If you are hungry, think about how full you want to be when you're done eating. Then you can more accurately prepare, serve or order an amount that will leave you feeling better when you're finished than you did when you started.
- If you're feeling anxious, stressed or hurried, pause for a moment to calm and center yourself before you start to eat so that your emotions don't contribute to mindless eating or overeating. Sometimes just taking a few deep breaths before you begin eating will shift your energy and allow for a more satisfying experience.
- Create a more pleasing environment in which to eat. This might mean clearing the clutter off your dining room table, setting it nicely and eating a meal with some peaceful music in the background. Other times it might mean something simpler: eating away from your work desk, enjoying a snack outdoors, or even just turning off the television and tuning into your food or the people you're eating with.

When we truly value someone or something, we offer it our full attention. We prioritize it. If you love to eat, what could you do to better demonstrate it?

Sources:
www.amihungry.com